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## **OLD REGIME DIES; WILL THERE BE A SECOND LIFE FOR CAMR?**

***Last shipment of life-saving medicines to Rwanda signals end of current regime, while delayed federal election favours reforms before Parliament***

**TORONTO, September 17, 2009** — Tomorrow, the last shipment of lower-cost, life-saving AIDS medicines made possible through Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR) will begin making its way to people in Rwanda who desperately need it. But the supplier, Canada's largest generic drug manufacturer, has indicated it will not make any further attempt to use the flawed CAMR, pointing out that it required years of work to achieve one single licence authorizing the shipment of a single AIDS drug to a single developing country.

At the same time, the likely postponement of a federal election increases chances that Parliament might pass pending legislation to reform CAMR and make it more workable, thereby saving thousands of lives at no additional cost to Canadian taxpayers.

Both Bill C-393 in the House of Commons and Bill S-232 before the Senate would streamline CAMR with a simplified 'one-licence solution' as proposed by a broad coalition of civil society groups, including the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. This approach would eliminate the current requirement for separate negotiations with patent-holding pharmaceutical companies for each purchasing country and each order of medicines, providing a more workable process to get affordable medicines for people in developing countries with HIV/AIDS.

"Today marks the death of CAMR in its current form," says Richard Elliott, the Legal Network's Executive Director. "It's shameful that an initiative lauded by the government as one of Canada's contributions to addressing the global AIDS pandemic and other public health needs has delivered so little. Now that a federal election seems delayed, parliamentarians will be given another opportunity to come together, as they did five years ago, to set aside their partisan interests and demonstrate their compassion."

Pressure to pass the bills has been growing. Hundreds of Canadian grandmothers across the country have mobilized to support the legislative changes as part of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign in support of African grandmothers bearing the burdens of the AIDS epidemic, including caring for children living with or orphaned by the disease. Earlier this year, the group circulated a petition which included a call to

reform CAMR. Over 32,000 Canadians signed this petition which the Grandmothers gave to MPs and Senators for them to table in Parliament.

“We are calling on all parliamentarians to ensure Canada respects its commitment to people in developing countries,” says Peggy Edwards, spokesperson for the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. “CAMR was passed more than five years ago but has only been used once, even though the need for affordable medicines is enormous. We will continue to demand that the government and all parties in Parliament act to fix CAMR now.”

CAMR was created by legislation initially passed by Parliament just over five years ago with unanimous support from all political parties but has delivered little, and many civil society groups have been calling for it to be improved. This past May, over 40 Canadian and international groups underlined the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CAMR by issuing a statement in which they asked parliamentarians to amend CAMR.

Apotex has publicly committed to making a formulation of a key medication specifically suitable for children and infants with AIDS if CAMR is streamlined.

“Every day counts for people who are dying without the affordable medicines they need to survive,” adds Mr. Elliott. “Half of all children with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa die before the age of two because they don’t have access to affordable, practicable medicines suited for children. Canada could help address this desperate public health and human rights tragedy by streamlining CAMR to make it workable.”

For more information: [www.aidslaw.ca/camr](http://www.aidslaw.ca/camr).

### **About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)) promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada’s leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

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### **Contacts:**

Gilles Marchildon  
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network  
+1 416 595-1666 ext. 228  
[gmarchildon@aidslaw.ca](mailto:gmarchildon@aidslaw.ca)

Peggy Edwards  
Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign  
+1 613 730-2679  
[wanderingpeggy@me.com](mailto:wanderingpeggy@me.com)